

River otters fishing for names at Brandywine Zoo; contest to reveal best fit for zoo's newest animals

WILMINGTON (April 19, 2013) – Two male North American River Otters have taken up residence at the Brandywine Zoo and visitors can not only meet them starting Saturday, April 20, but zoo-goers also have an opportunity to help choose names for the otters by voting at the zoo throughout the spring.

The four-year-old river otters will reside in a dedicated exhibit long a popular highlight at the Brandywine Zoo, with its underwater window and observation bridge which provide great vantage points to watch the otters' playful antics.

"The otters will almost certainly become a focal point at the Brandywine Zoo," said Zoo Director Nancy Falasco, "and we're having a naming contest enabling visitors to connect even better with them."

Zoo staff has narrowed naming options for the otters. Proposed names – the otters will be matched as "Red & Hudson," "Cisco & Wally" or "Timber & Clark" – are posted in the zoo, and visitors can vote on the name set they like best by contributing \$1 with each vote. Contributions from the naming contest will benefit the Delaware Zoological Society, the non-profit volunteer organization which supports the Brandywine Zoo. The otters' official names will be revealed on July 4.

The North American River Otter is a semi-aquatic mammal found in and along the waterways and coasts of North America. An adult river otter can weigh between 11 and 31 lbs. River otters tend to live an average of 10 to 15 years in the wild, but in zoos like the Brandywine Zoo, where they receive a

protected home, healthy diets and veterinary care, their life expectancy increases to an average of 23 years. The two beloved otters that previously lived at the Brandywine Zoo, Star and Jester, enjoyed long lives and passed away of natural causes due to old age.

The zoo's new otters came from a facility in Minnesota. Otters are members of the Mustelidae family which also includes weasels, skunks and ferrets. Their zoo diet consists of fish and other foods common to cats and even an egg every other day.

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The Brandywine Zoo welcomes visitors to come see the otters and enjoy the zoo's many other animals. The Brandywine Zoo is part of Delaware State Parks and is managed by DNREC's Division of Parks and Recreation, with the support of the Delaware Zoological Society. Located at 1001 North Park Drive in Wilmington, the Brandywine Zoo is open every day of the year, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, visit www.BrandywineZoo.org or call 302 571-7747.

The Brandywine Zoo is a proud accredited member of the American Association of Zoos and Aquariums, a distinction that marks its commitment to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for the visitors and a better future for all living things.

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